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Unclassified Summary of Public Positions on INF

Press coverage of the Vice President's trip and INF in general is tapering off in the UK and France. Media interest remains relatively high in West Germany. [] 25X1

UK Thatcher and Kohl yesterday in London said that INF negotiations would continue even if there were no agreement with Moscow on a total ban. The Guardian highlighted what it termed the Vice President's twin "admissions" that not all INF basing countries are in complete agreement with US policy and that there was a deepening gulf between Europe and the US on economic policy. The Times' Brussels correspondent commented yesterday that Vice President Bush stressed the "moral position" of NATO on the zero option. The correspondent surmised that European leaders had underscored to the Vice President the need to "evangelize on this point." [] 25X1

West Germany Reuter reported yesterday that Kohl had pledged to visit Moscow if he is still Chancellor after the election on 6 March. The conservative Die Welt yesterday reflected on the Vice President's trip, noting that the "media-conscious" White House "couldn't resist the temptation to provide the Vice President with some promotional tricks." The paper specifically referred to the US summit proposal and the Bush visit to Geneva. Die Welt also reported that Kohl told a CDU "peace congress" in Bonn that the INF negotiations will enter a decisive stage after the West German elections. Kohl added that Moscow was struggling for the "heart and soul" of the Germans rather than for progress in Geneva. According to the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (independent), Kohl said that INF should be deployed in several West European countries as planned and added that restricting US missiles to West Germany is not an issue. Stuttgarter Zeitung (independent) quoted SPD deputy Ehmke as saying that peace and security issues "should not be used for election campaign tactics or for public relations actions." Ehmke welcomed President Reagan's "readiness" to meet Andropov but added that there should be "no strings attached to such readiness." [] 25X1

France The French press yesterday did not devote much space to the Bush trip. The exception was Le Monde, which published a "thought piece" which sought to place the INF issue in the broader context of US-Soviet relations. Editor-in chief Andre Fontaine argued that, given the "overkill" capacity of US and Soviet strategic systems, "the fact that there is a little more on one side than on the other is not very important." He concluded that the military balance could not be maintained only by equality of arms and troops; rather it was necessary for rival empires to "become friends again and look toward similar goals." [] 25X1

USSR In a TASS commentary Thursday, Moscow warned Kohl that he could face defeat in next month's West German elections if he continues "obediently to follow in Washington's wake." The article added that Genscher had long supported the zero option, and that this had had "deplorable results" on the FDP's popularity. TASS and Moscow radio promptly reported the Vice President's speech before the 40-nation Committee on Disarmament at Geneva yesterday. They condemned his defense of the zero option and his "absurd fantasies" on use of Soviet-origin chemical weapons in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia. TASS and Moscow television took brief note of the Vice President's meeting with the Soviet START/INF delegations. [] 25X1

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